


MYLE CHARAINE



A PLAY
IN THREE ACTS




BY CUSHAG



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GLOSSARY.

Vyrneen	Sweet-heart.
Mrastyr beg	Supper (lit. : little dinner).
Cassan	Footpath.
Fanks	Grass slopes.
Correejink	Obstinate.
Baarle	English speech.
Grummercies (from "grand merci").....	Small unexpected doles.
Going on the bag	Begging.
Unnisup	Deserts.
Dwine	To pine away.
Tanrogans	Large scallop shells (used as lamps).
Butched	Bewitched.
Tegher	Dowry.
Yshig	Father.

As my lomarcen daag oo me!
And lonely has thou left me!

Mylecharaine

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Persons Represented:

MYLECHARAINE A Miserly Farmer
MARGARET His Daughter
DANIEL KINRADE Her Sailor Lover
BETSEY Housekeeper and Foster-
Mother to Margaret.
ALICE WADE A Neighbour

TIME:

ABOUT THE END OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

The scene is laid in Jurby, where the remains of the old sod house, looking over the Curraghs, were still standing a very few years ago.

ACT 1.

Outside the white-washed wall of the farmhouse. One or two farm implements lying about; a rough deal table and bench. Margaret standing with buckets beside her, holding out silver Cross to show Dan, who proceeds to tie it again round her neck.

MARGARET:

Aw Dan, thou'd better go now.

DAN:

An' what for must I go, an' what's your hurry anyhow?

MARGARET:

I must go, though. Them calves is waitin' all this time.

DAN:

An' amn't I waitin', too—these days an' days. Deed I'd be doin' better if I was a calf, it's like.

MARGARET:

A goose, more likely. Go now, Dan [looking round nervously], go on now, do. I hear me Daa roarin' in the haggart, an' he'll be here just now lookin' for me.

DAN:

I saw your Daa down at the end of the lane, going away from here, so sit down Margaret veen—sit for a bit anyhow.

MYLECHARAINE

MARGARET :

[Looks round and across Curraghs shading her eyes from the setting sun, then sits down beside Dan.]

DAN

[Taking her hand again] : You see, Margaret vyrneen, I'm really wanting to see Himself this everin' and get things settled.

MARGARET

[Shyly] : What things, Dan ?

DAN :

Aw now, isn't there only wan thing that I'm thinkin' of night and day, an' that our weddin'.

MARGARET

[After a little pause] : Isn't it nice, sitting here of an everin' an' seein' the sun set beyond the Curraghs ? They're pretty just now with the light on them, an' the blue hills away beyond.

DAN :

Ay, pretty enough ; but wait till I can make a start to grow corn down there ; that will be prettier still—an' you comin' over the fields with the mrastyr beg for the harvesters. I must get over to Port-ny-Hinshey to-night, though ; it's like I would get a short cut across the Curraghs where that cassan yondhar is goin'.

MARGARET :

There is a short cut that way, but be you careful, Dan, for there's awful holes down there, and further on the road gets so narrow between them big gullies of ditches you might easily fall in an' never a soul to know. You would be lyin' under the brown peat water, and the dead leaves drifting on the face of it, an' me longing and wondering if you were coming back to me. Aw, Dan, don't go that way ! The night will be middlin' dark—an' there's something taking down there, too. Aw, yes. An' quare flashes of lights sliding here and there. I don't like to see them lights at night down there.

DAN :

I'll be all right, lass, for I'll be thinkin' of you all the time, and the way will seem short till I get to Ballaugh, where I'll be comin' out on the high-road. Besides, them Ill Wans havn't got no power over a person with only good thoughts in his heart. But see here now, Light of my Heart, I want to get things settled before I go, for there's a power of talk goin' about all the fine suitors Himself is trying to encourage for you.

MARGARET :

They may be suitin' my Daa, but they're not suitin' me at all.

DAN :

Ay, they're suitin' him right enough ; an' him playin' them off wan agin the other—

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

gettin' a bit of lan' from wan, an' a parcel of gold from another. Didn' I see a parcel of fellas comin' down the road from the house last Saturday, wan after the other?

MARGARET:

[Looking interested]: Who were they, at all, Dan?

DAN:

How was I to know, an' the night as dark as pitch? There was oul' John-Billy-John was wan, anyhow.

MARGARET:

They say there's an awful nice place at John-Billy-John in Kirk Michael over, with a fine new slate house on it. A fine handsome man, too!

DAN:

He was that—maybe 40 years ago.

MARGARET:

Who else, Dan?

DAN:

Aw, Tommy the Fanks was there, too, an' it's not so long since he was lef' a widow-man, either.

MARGARET:

Poor Tommy, for all. Me an' me Daa was over to Kirk Bride seeing him last week. I do feel sorry for him—an' the house gone all through-other. Widow-men is so heartless!

DAN:

Aw, well, listen though. When Tommy come home from the funeral, there She was settin' on a cheer in the mids' of the flure. "Aw, Kirry," he says, "that's terrible orconvenient," he says, "an' me thinkin' of gettin' married again, that them fine things of yours won't be goin' waste." "No fear, Tommy, my man," says she. "I'll starch her, whoever she is, if she dare lay a hand on my things."

MARGARET:

What stories you've got, Dan boy!

DAN:

Lil oul' Simon-Bill-Sal was there, too. A dacent quait man, if he have lost an eye.

MARGARET:

You see, Dan, they've all got money an' good farms and places of their own. Me Daa has never said much to me, for he's terrible close, but I'm hearin' things from Betsey.

[Enter Betsey.]

BETSEY

[Aside]: Aw, the dear me! The pair of them settin' theer as quait as pussy. An' Himself rampin' an' ragin' because them calves is cryin' out an' the gel not at them yet with their suppers. [In a low voice]: Margaret, chile! Margaret!

MYLECHARAINE

MARGARET

[Not noticing]: He've got some spite against you, too, Dan; an' sayin' you're only a poor bogh, an' a furriner from the Sous without a penny piece in your pocket, lea alone that there's no lan' at your wans in the North.

DAN:

There will be a fine farm at me in the North, though, some of these days, an' what he boasts of giving to you is not more than I will be matching.

BETSEY

[Coming forward]: Margaret, gel. Don't thou hear me? I tell you he's comin', chile. Get you out of his way, chile veen. [Margaret picks up her buckets and hurries off.] How's yourself, Dan'el boy? Dear me, how like the mother thou are! A good fren' she was to me when I was a lumper away in sarvice at Ballacashtel. I'm thinkin' thou'd bes' be off out of this, Dan boy, for our oul' man is terrible-in-the-worl' coorse if anything is goin' agin' him.

DAN:

[Moving to one side, looking after the way Margaret went]: Isn't she the darlin' picture, Betsey?

BETSEY:

Picture enough. But lizzen here, boy veen; thou'll only make it worse for her if he finds you here an' him in his rages.

DAN:

They say he's so miserly that he is grudging money for the very clothes she has on her. Still an' for all she's not so bad dressed, Betsey—an' the lovely silver Cross an' all.

BETSEY:

Go away with you! It's not him that's givin' her things. Them's things belongin' to her mother that's away these years. Time an' again he's thried to get that lil silver charm from her, too, only I was threatenin' him that she would jus' take an' dwine away wantin' it; an' that's thrue enough, for the Misthress toul' me herself, when she put the chile into my arrums from her dying bed—"Betsey," she said, "mind you the chile; an' mind that silver Cross doesn't get took off her, for she'll die wantin' it," she said.

DAN

[Looking round]: The place is middlin' bare, too. Is she gettin' mate, Betsey? Them young gels should be gettin' plenty.

BETSEY

[A little huffed]: Never you fear. It's meself has the seein' to that, young man. But lawshelpme, the time she have sootherin' an' persuadin' him to put dacent duds on himself, an' him takin' her to market on

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

the pillion, an' lookin' like some oul' labourer, an' him the richest man in the North.

DAN :

What right has he to be shammin' her so?

BETSEY :

Aw, thou'll get lave! Go on now, Dan'el, like a good lad, before he gets a sight of you, for he's that correejink at times that if he was threw in tae harbour itself he'd dhrown in the mill-dam to spite you. Go now, lad, for all the sakes. Ogh, hogh, mille Jough! There he is for a'l. Just hark at him!

[Mylecharaine comes in glowering and scolding. He is dressed in dirty old worn coat and breeches, one rough woollen stocking dirty white, the other dark-coloured. He has carranes on his feet and a big stick in his hand.]

[Dan moves a little away.]

MYLECHARAINE :

What are thou doin' here at all, Betsey Ballure, wastin' my good time colloquin' with yondhar young wastrel? Deed, I would have thought thou were oul' enough to have done with such rubbage.

BETSEY :

Rubbage, indeed; an' me only passin' the time of day an' keepin' me han' in! Wastin' YOUR time! I wouldn' thruss but you are wastin' MY time. Are you goin' to get me them leeks before dark? You'll get no bross for your suppers if I don't have them middlin' quick. A passel of oul turmits is all you would be puttin' in the bross if I wasn't here to be steerin' you.

MYLECHARAINE :

Keep your place, woman.

BETSEY :

I will that, an' it's not you that will be puttin' me out of it neither, so long as I choose to stop in an' see that the chile miles is not destroyed with your roarin' an' miserliness. [Shouting after him as he gces out]: Mind you get me them leeks now. [Sol.]: Was there ever such an' oul' scraeper? He'll be a bit of time gettin' the leeks now, and that will give them two time to be lavin' good-bye with each other.

[Enter old widow-woman. She is dressed in short full petticoat of blue homespun, a black shawl pinned over her head, showing the white goffered frill of her cap.]

OLD WOMAN :

Will I get word with Himself this everin', do you think, Betsey?

BETSEY

[Turning round]: Aw, good averin' to you, Mrs Wade.

MYLECHARAINE

OLD WOMAN :

Can I have a word with the Masthar?

BETSEY :

It's like thou'll get some words FROM him. Could thou come in the morning? He's very contrary jus' now, an' I'm thinkin' he'd be aiser dealt with another day. I've got him pullin' leeks in the garden now, the road these young wans will have a lil cooish. He'll be so busy sortin' out the poorest for the boss, an' countin' the res' that he'll forget to be after them.

OLD WOMAN :

I mus' see him to-night, Betsey vogh, for it's not so long now to our settlin' up, an' I mus' beg him on my bended knees to give us a lil more time.

BETSEY :

I'm sorry dreadful to think of your bein' so much in his debt, for he's that set on drawin' lan' to himself an' gool to the chiss that there's neither rhyme nor raison can stan' before him. He's sellin' the happiness of his only chile to get more, makin' it known the big dowry he'll be given with her, but makin' sure that whoever will have her will aquil that with as good an' more. You never seen such a clutch of oul' schamers as he have got comin' for the gel.

OLD WOMAN :

Aw, Betsey, the way he was schamin' to be drawin' our wans into his net. Our boy's father was as good a man as ever stepped for all he was my son; an', behoul ye, wan time when he was a lil bit behind with the rent, comes this falla all smirking an' smilin' an'—"I'll len' ye the money," he says. "Payment!" he says, "aw, not at all. Take your time, man; take your own time—a thrifle of intheress now and then, but no hurry at all." An' then poor Jamesey was drawn in an' a bit now an' a bit again thrus on him as you may say, an' th' intheress mountin' shockin' all the time. An' now poor James is under the sod, an' that boy of his thryin' to get sthraight and kape th' oul' place where he was rarin' toe, if only we'll get a bit of time.

BETSEY :

Come you to-morrow, Alice. Don't thry for to see him to-night at all.

OLD WOMAN :

No, Betsey. I cannot go back to the childher till I know. I'll go down the garden to him. Praps he'll be more softer out there than settin' in sight of his chiss. [Exit.]

BETSEY :

Poor oul' Alice. I'm afraid she'll not move him if she do go on her knees. I wonder where them two young wans is now?

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Away down the lane, it's like. I hope
Himself will not get sight of them.
Lawshelpme, what's to do now!

[Enter Mylecharaine, shouting, with o-d
woman hanging on to him, clutching at
him, half-crying, half-scolding.]

OLD WOMAN :

Will thou give us time, or will thou have
that boy grow up to do murder on thee
some black night?

[Trying to loose her hold]: I will not
give you more time. I've waited long
enough. Give over now, an' lave desthroyin'
the jackad on me.

OLD WOMAN

[Beating him with feeble hands]: Take
that—an' that—an' that for an' oul' flinty-
hearted, miserly money-grubber that would
rob his own mother for a half-penny.

MYLECHARAINE :

Will thou let go before I strike thee?

OLD WOMAN :

Thou may strike! It's like thou'll brain
me, like thou've done others, if all's thrue
the people's sayin'.

MYLECHARAINE :

[With concentrated fury, lifting his stick]:
I'll do for you yet, if I have to hang for it.

OLD WOMAN :

Thou'll hang anyway, it's like. Take that,
then! [Beating him again.]

MYLECHARAINE :

Thou've a tongue on thee would cut rags.
Are thou not ashamed, an oul' woman like
you, to be losin' houl't of herself?

OLD WOMAN :

I'm ashamed to be wastin' words on such
trash as thou, with all thy gool. It's in
the deepest pit under Peel Castle thou
should be put, an' taken out and' scutched
every day.

BETSEY :

[Coming forward]: Wheer's them leeks,
Masthar?

MYLECHARAINE :

Put this woman out, Betsey. What are
thou doin', standin' starin' theer like that
for? I'll have her took an' put in jail, as
sure as I'm alive. Put her out, or I'll fire
thee, too.

BETSEY :

Kape your roarin' for the House of Kays!
It's like they'll have time to listen to thee
there. [Putting an arm round old woman]
Aw, come away, woman dear. It's no use
o' talkin'. Praps he'll take a turn an' be
more lenienter another day.

OLD WOMAN :

Leave me go, Betsey Ballure. I'll say no
more till him—but [turning again to Myle-

MYLECHARAINE

charaine] take you heed John Robert Mylecharaine—my seven curses on thee—from this day—on thy crops an' on thy house; on thy barns an' stocks; on thy mate an' on thy jough; on the gel that is the light of thy eyes, an' on thy black miserly sowl—if thou've got wan! [Suddenly bursts into tears, and throws herself weeping into Betsey's arms.]

BETSEY :

Come, veen, come. Don't take on so.

OLD WOMAN :

What will I have to say to the childher at home, an' the boy that's thryin' these days to take his father's place!

MYLECHARAINE :

Put her out, Betsey. I'll have the law on her for assault an' slander. I'll have her put in the stocks, an' see what'll she be puttin' curses on then. [To Old Woman]: I'm not mindin' thy curses. There's worse in the Psalms. Begone with yourself an' your imperence, before I put the dogs on you.

BETSEY :

Houl' on now, Masthar; thou are gone too far this time. An' the chile miles an' a'll to suffer for what thou are doin'. Aw the dear, dear me, there'll be the throubles of the worl' doin' in jus' now, for this woman, God help her, is well known to be terrible thick with wans we darn't put a name to. [Exit, leading Old Woman.]

[Enter Dan, coming forward as the old man mutters and glowers, biting his nails and knocking his stick on the ground.]

DAN :

May I have a word with you this everin', Mr Mylecharaine?

MYLECHARAINE :

Ay, it's like you may, an' its like it wi'll be a word you won't like. Be quick an' say what you've got to say, an' then begone an' the back of my han' to you.

DAN :

Mr Mylecharaine, I wish to marry your daughter.

MYLECHARAINE

[Pretending to look surprised]: Aw, the dear me heart! Jus' hear him! As boul' as boul'!

DAN :

Mr Mylecharaine, sir, you must know that it is me that Margaret loves, and surely you won't go against your only child.

MYLECHARAINE :

An' why won't I go against her, when she's being 'ticed away from her only parent?

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

DAN :

I have done no enticing. I have come to you honourable, and as man to man I ask you to give her to me; and I swear by all the Powers that she shall never repent it.

MYLECHARAINE :

You can talk fine anyhow. An' how am I to know what you have to keep her on. Mind you, me bou' boy, it's not for the like of you my daughter is, for all you're comin' sodjerin' roun' an' talkin' the Baarle like a fine gentleman. It's well-known that my gel is not goin' emp'y-handed, but with a fortune at her fit for the highest in the lan'. An' the man that has her will have to aquil that fortune, an' bate it too, before I give my consent. So there!

DAN :

Suppose I tell you that whatever you are giving your daughter—an' I want none of your goul with her—suppose I undertake to aquil, or more likely double, what you say you are giving her.

MYLECHARAINE

[Staring incredulously]: Aw, my gogh! What'll you be sayin' next? Thou'll be Governor of th' Islan' next, it's like, an' thinkin' everything becomes thee—you be off out of this, or I'll be helpin' you middlin' handy. [Shaking his stick.]

DAN :

Keep your stick for them that's comin' creepin' after thy gold. I tell you, an' it's throe as you are here, I will even, an' more than even, what you propose to give your daughter.

MYLECHARAINE

[Scornfully]: Prove it, man; prove it.

DAN :

Wait you a minute. [Removes belt from under his jersey.] Sit you down, now, an' talk reasonable, an' I'll show you something that will surprize you.

[Mylecharaine sits down grumbling. Dan sits beside him, laying canvas belt on the table.]

DAN :

Look you here, now, an' feel the weight of this.

MYLECHARAINE

[Taking it in his hands]: Well, what's in it? Coppers an' oul' iron it's like.

DAN

[Lays belt on table, and opens one of the little pockets. Yellow gold is seen shining. Mylecharaine clutches at it greedily]: Wait you. [Pushing the old man's hands away.] Each wan of these pockets is packed full of gold pieces. There's £500 in them alone. [Opening one at the end nearest himself

MYLECHARAINE

with a little key.] See there, then. [Lifts out a small bag from which he pours little shining stones into his left hand.]

MYLECHARAINE

[Gasping and trying to claw the belt to himself]: Aw, my gogh! Let me feel of them! Aw, give me the belt an' all, that I'll take care of it for thee. Good life, man, thou may be robbed any day with that on thee. Give it me here, an' I'll lock it up safe.

DAN :

Will thou give thy consent to our weddin' if I do?

MYLECHARAINE :

Aw, well now. Thraie-dy-lhiooar. When thou come back from this voyage, it's like we'll talk it over. Give me the belt; it will be far safeter with me.

DAN :

No, sir, the belt will do very well [putting it round him again] where it is. I'm not going to trust any man with it till I come home. An' on our weddin' day thou may ask me again an'—well, we'll talk it over. Mind you, there's good lands belonging to me too, near Ballacashel. Let alone what I've got in this belt—an' the farm of th' oul' Fairy Doctor at Gat-y-Wing, has been promised me, too, these years, an' me near-er of kin an' all.

MYLECHARAINE :

Aw, well, thou are obstinate terrible. Still an' for all we'll part friends. Deed I'll go a piece of the way with thee, for the night is fallin', an' thou'll not so easy find thy way through them Curragh tracks.

BETSEY

[He's navar goin' across the Curraghs, surely, an' these nights as dark as Janooary. Take th' oul' shore road, Daniel boy. It's a bit longer, maybe, but it's far an' away safeter.

MYLECHARAINE

[Turning round angrily]: What do thou want, Betsey, comin' prowlin' roun' like th' oul' cat in the dark. Go an' fetch a dhrink of—er-er-buttermilk for this gentleman an' be quick. [Exit Betsey.]

DAN :

I lef' my kit an' my big coat at the other gate. I must go an' fetch them.

MYLECHARAINE :

Ay, go on; I'll not be long till I'll be up with thee. [Aside to himself as Dan goes]: Wherever did he get such a sight of gold! I MUST have that belt, an' all them dimonds, hundreds of pounds it's like. I WILL have it! What right has a young wastrel like that to be havin' such fortune. [Biting his nails and considering.] He's pretty sturdy.

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

an' it's like he'd stick to the belt like wax, but still—in the dark—an' me comin' quait afther—a lil tap would knock him senseless, an' I would have the belt off of him before he come to—an' then he would be thinkin' it was the Carisdhoo men or the like had took it—an' I'll wager he'd show his face here no more, an' he done out of his treasure.

BETSEY

[Coming with mugs on tray]: Lawshelpme, Masthar, what are thou sayin' about the Carisdhoo men. For goodness sake, hurry afther the boy, for fear some ill wans will be on him.

MYLECHARAINE :

No fear. He's comin' back here directly, an' we'll take the road together. Time enough when the moon will be up.

BETSEY

[Looking suspiciously at him]: There's no moon in just now, an' that thou knows.

MYLECHARAINE :

Put that tray down, an' take thyself off to the kitchen, an' don't be comin' spyin' here on me all the time. Deed I'm near bet out with oul' women comin' afther me.

[Betsey flounces off angrily. Mylecharaine looks round and all about, then drops something in one of the mugs.]

MYLECHARAINE :

Here, boy, come and take a dhrop.

[Dan returns with kit, drinks a little, and sets down mug. They go out together.]

CURTAIN.

MYLECHARAINE

ACT II.

A FORTNIGHT LATER.

[Farm kitchen, bare and poverty-stricken. A deal table, an arm chair, a form or stools. A kettle or three-legged pot hanging from slowry; a small dull fire of peats. One or two rush light holders or tanrogans.]

MARGARET :

At her wheel sings :—

O Vylecharaine, where got thou the gold
Thy daughter's fine togher to be;
Thou've banished the love that my heart
would enfold
As my lomarcen daag oo mee!
O Yshig thou've bartered thy child for the
gold,
An' gilded the togher may be,
But gold will not pay for a heart that is
sold,
As my lomarcen daag oo mee!

BETSEY

[Coming in]: Chile, chile, don't be
singin' that disthressful oul' song. Sing
cheerful now, darlin' lov'.

MARGARET :

You used to be tellin' me how fond my
mother was of that oul' tune, an' I was
putting two-three silly words to it to see
would singin' ease my heart that's tired
achin' these days.

BETSEY

[Caressing her]: We've all got heart-ache
some days, my lamb.

MARGARET :

Was my mother gettin' sould at her Daa,
do you think, Betsey? Me Daa has never
been bad to me, but he's a terrible hard
man, an' sure it's a quare an' sorrowful
tune for my mother to be so fond of. Tell
me, Betsey, bogh, isn't it time we were
gettin' some word from Dan? I'm thinkin',
Betsey, till I'm feared to think, have any-
thing come on him.

BETSEY :

The time is seemin' long cruel to them
that's waitin' chree—but never fear—good
times an' bad times an' all times is goin'
by in their own time—though I'm allowin'
the good times is scutchin' themselves away
terrible quick.

MARGARET :

There's something in that's not right.
What's doin' on me Daa these days past?
There's something quare come on him. Look
at him [pointing through door] out there

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

in the haggart, covered in black mire as if he had been trampin' the bogs all night. Deed, I don't believe he's goin' to bed at all some nights—and other times, if he is takin' a toss of sleep on his bed, he starts roarin' an' cryin' in the night till I'm afraid to go to sleep. Are you hearin' him, Betsey?

BETSEY :

I am that, chile, but don't thou be takin' too much notice, veen, for he's not pleased when he thinks any person is obsarvin' him. He'll be feelin' pretty bad annoyed jus' now, too, with this murrain that's goin' among the cattle—two good bases dead at him this very mornin', they're sayin'—an' Alfred Ernest was tellin' him jus' now that some person mus' have loosed the gate in the Curragh Glass where the young coults were, an' behoul' ye, they got away over the Curraghs, an' the best of them so bad hurted that he will have to be desthroyed; an' the res' strayin' away to Sulby and Ballaugh, it's like. Aw, well, it's troubles we'll be gettin' now an' no res!

MARGARET :

It's worse than that, I'm fearin', Betsey. Look now at him comin' in, and see the quare way he's lookin' aroun' and behind him. Betsey, Betsey, is there some terrible thing done at him? Oh, Betsey, I'm dreaming and dreaming of them black dubs in the Curraghs, with the scarlet and yellow leaves lying on the face of the brown peat water, an' a little ripple in the mids' as if something had gone down.

BETSEY :

Hush, hush, here's him comin'.

MYLECHARAINE

[Coming in, looking savagely and suspiciously round, sits down heavily in arm chair.]

BETSEY

[After a pause]: Will thou have thy porridge now, Masthar?

MYLECHARAINE :

Where is it? Give it here that I'll be done with it.

[Betsey lifts basin from hearth, and sets it before him with a horn spoon.]

MYLECHARAINE

[Angrily to Margaret]: What are thou stoppin' the queel for?

MARGARET

[Fetching a small jug from dresser]: Here's a drop of sweet milk, Daa.

MYLECHARAINE

[Laying down spoon angrily]: Sweet milk! Are thou suppin' sweet milk, an' the cows dyin' on us every day! Deed,

MYLECHARAINE

thou'll have me ruinated with waste and high livin'. Put that milk to the bitheg crock, Betsey, an' fetch me the buttermilk. [Betsey brings buttermilk. Mylecharaine eats a few spoonfuls, and then pushes basin from him.]

BETSEY :

What's wrong with the porridge, Masthar?

MYLECHARAINE :

Did I say anything was wrong with it? Mayn't a man lave a drop in the basin without an oul' besom obsarvin' him? An' it's burnt and wasted, anyhow.

BETSEY :

How dare you be sayin' such a thing! Never in all my born days have I burnt the porridge! Never! An' if it is burnt, it's because thou're so niggardly that thou'll not give money for a new pan. Did thou ever see the like of that—[thrusting the porridge pot at him and beating on it with the porridge stick]—I can near see the window through it if I houl it up to the light. It's that thin, so it is! Maybe thou'd bes' keep it for an ornament. They say some of these high wans is terrible set on oul' kitchen things for ornamentatin' their dromn-rooms. Maybe them's the surt thou want for thy daughter. Thou'll exchange her an' th' oul' pot together for a gold piece.

MYLECHARAINE :

Will you be quait, ye oul' screech-owl.

BETSEY :

Me! I'm not sayin' nawthin'! What can thou expect of the porridge an' an oul' widow-woman tormented for money at thee ti'll she's got nawthin' lef, but curses.

MYLECHARAINE :

Curses is apt to come home to roost, they're sayin'.

BETSEY :

An' isn't that the best thing they can do, the way you know where they are. [Begins scraping pot vigorously and calling ck, chk, to the hens outside]: Come along chuck, chuck, and see will you get a piece; it's like it's all the grummercies you'll have this day! [Hangs kettle on slowry, and stands at window with knitting.]

[Mylecharaine leans back in his chair, and presently drops off to sleep. After a few minutes he begins to mutter in his sleep, the women stopping their work to exchange glances and watch him uneasily.]

MYLECHARAINE :

Where in the worl'—have I put it? Aw, the dear, dear me. [Groans and sobs.] I lef' it in that place—there's none would be passin' that dark hole—deep, deep, it is—aw, dark terrible. Ogh, hogh, it's coul'—[stretching out right arm]—an' me puttin'—

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

my arrum in up to the shouter. It's gone at me! Ogh, hogh. [Louder]: What are you all talkin' about bodies? [Looking round.] I tell you there isn't none in, an' you can't hang me, so you can't. It's los' at me;—[voice rising to a scream; the women standing huddled together terrified]—it's los'. I'm sayin'. Aw dear, dear, the belt an' all is gone losted, too. [Sobs and groans.] I'm only a poor oul' man. What could I be doin' agin the like of that falla? Aw, murther, an' all. [Suddenly sits up batting with his hands and glaring with unseeing eyes.] Keep off of me! Keep off, I say, with thy white face! [Shouts. Margaret runs from room with hands to her ears.] I tell thee I didn't go fer to do it. Aw, dear, what'll I do at all. Even the belt is gone, an' where in all the wide worl' did I lave the corp? [Sobbing again.] Only a poor feeble oul' man I am—ha. [Wakes.] Have I been talkin' in my sleep, Betsey?

BETSEY

[Soothing]: Not to spake of, Masthar. No, no; naught for a person to be takin' notice of special.

MYLECHARAINE:

I've always been bad for talkin' in my sleep, an' I was dhramin' I was chasin' the red heifer in the Curragh down, an' I falled into the Lhedn Trench goin' afther her—that's the way I was cryin' out.

BETSEY

[Dryly]: It's like it is. Lizzen here, Mastha. Are thou hearin' any word of the boy that was here wantin' Margaret?

MYLECHARAINE

[Getting up uneasily]: What do you mane? Is it me hearin' of yondhar falla? I don't want to be hearin' of the like of him. Good riddance to him, with his impence, comin' afther my girl. What are thou comin' to me for newses for? I'm not goin' on the bag yet, though it's like thou'll have me druv to it with all the high livin' that's goin' in this house. [Starting as some little noise is heard.] What's that noise?

BETSEY:

Aw, jus' the cat jumpin' off the shelf in the dairy—schamin' afther the crame, it's like.

MYLECHARAINE:

An' is the crame . . . —Where's the gel, Betsey? Was she hearin' me?

BETSEY:

She runned away out of the room with her hands over her face when thou started yelling.

MYLECHARAINE:

I'm askin' thee was she hearin' anything?

MYLECHARAINE

BETSEY :

I'm not sayin' she was, an' I'm not sayin' she wasn't.

MYLECHARAINE :

Answer me this minute, an' don't be tellin' me no lies. Did she hear what thou heard?

BETSEY :

Deed she did, then, or what fer would she have runned out? "Betsey, what's doin' on me Daa?" she was sayin'. "Sure we'll have to get him took and put in the mad-house," she was sayin'—

MYLECHARAINE

[Interrupting] : Thou're tellin' lies by the kischen.

BETSEY :

It's like I am. [A loud knocking and noise in the farmyard.] Dear me heart, is the gable fell in on us?

MYLECHARAINE

[Listening nervously] : Go an' see who is there, an' say Mr Mylecharaine is not very well, an' is not seein' nobody.

BETSEY

[Looking out of window] : Aw, it's jus' that stupid lump lettin' the mare run the cart into the wall. Why won't thou pay decent wage to grown-up men, instead of these wastrels of half-grown scollags. Afraid of their imperence, and savin' thy poggad. Well, thou'd bes' take a lil slape now and quait thee down.

MYLECHARAINE :

Don't be lettin' Marg't come in here while I am aslape.

BETSEY :

You may be very sure of that, anyhow. I'o thou think I am goin' to let her hear thee carryin' on about corps an' bodies' an' the like of such ondacent things for a young gel to be hearin', an' her not even allowed a rush-light in her room, to show her the darkness in the mids' of the night, an' thou shoutin'?

MYLECHARAINE :

Give her a dozen rush-lights, so thou take thyself off. Of all contrary craythurs, an' oul' woman who has been allowed her own way in the house bates the world for cus-sedness.

BETSEY

[Going] : The less thou says about curses jus' now, the better, I'm thinkin'.

CURTAIN.

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

ACT III.

[Same room. Evening of same day. Mylecharaine is seated at table with papers and ink-horn and long quill pen. Enter Betsey.]

BETSEY :

Ogh, hogh, the throubles that's in!

MYLECHARAINE

[Looking up impatiently]: What's to do now?

BETSEY :

Throubles, an' more throubles, heaped up an' runnin' over.

MYLECHARAINE :

What's to do, I say?

BETSEY :

Thy darter's took bad now now, that's what's to do now. Gone fainted on the flure she was, an' the work of the worl' I have had to bring her to. The mother used to go off in them faints, too, an' it's like poor Margaret will be takin' after her.

MYLECHARAINE :

Chut, chut, somethin' she's been atin'. I'll be boun'. Gels is wake, and a very little upsets them.

BETSEY :

An' what would she get to be atin', only what I'm sthrivin' to be givin' her in spite of thy graspin' ways? No, no, it's takin' on she is, an' its frettin' she is terrible, an' its ill in her mind she is, too, an' talkin' to herself about them dark dubs in the Curragh.

MYLECHARAINE :

What are thou always talkin' about the Curraghs for? She used to be fond enough of takin' a stroul in them roads. It's thou has been puttin' things in her head. Lord help me, who's that! [Starting up suddenly, and upsetting table as a loud knock is heard.] Go an' tell them I'm not in—I'm gone to Douglas market. Tell them any lies thou like. I won't see anyone!

BETSEY :

Thou are not worth tellin' a lie for. Whatever's ailin' thee! [Goes out and returns.] It's only oul' Mrs Wade wantin' spache with thee.

MYLECHARAINE

[Holding door-handle of his room]: Send her off this minute. Put her away out of the house. I will NOT put sight or spache either on her.

OLD WOMAN

[Coming in]: Thou will do both, John Robert Mylecharaine, and Betsey Ballure may stop here as witness for what I've got to say.

BETSEY :

No, no, Alice—[stooping to set table to rights]—I won't be stoppin' here to plague

MYLECHARAINE

the man at all. It's like thou have something to say he won't want me to hear. Besides, I mus' be goin' to the chile miles. Give me a shout when you are done your talk—an' then it's like you'd batthar come and cast an eye on Marg't, for I'm not plazed at the way she's shapin' at all.

OLD WOMAN :

Well, well, go thy ways, woman. I have that to say to Himself that's maybe best said between our two selves alone.

[Betsey goes out, and Alice advances towards Mylecharaine, who stands half-fascinated watching her.]

MYLECHARAINE :

Take thy evil eye off me!

OLD WOMAN :

What black eed have thou on thy mind, John Robert, that thou are feared of an' oul' feeble woman that has been askin' thee for mercy?

MYLECHARAINE :

I HAVE giv' thee mercy. I might have had thee took an' put in the stocks for butchin', and for that thou have put the evil eye on me an' mine. I'll have no more mercy on thee and the likes of thee.

OLD WOMAN :

I'm not askin' for thy mercy no more. There's stiffer business now for me an' thou to be discoorsin. Do thou see this piece of paper? Listen while I read it thee.

[Fumbles slowly for her glasses, still keeping her eye fixed on Mylecharaine as he sits down by the table and gazes at her. She reads out]: "I, John Robert Mylecharaine, of the Parish of Jurby, do promise to wait two years for payment of the money due to me from James Wade, of the Curragh Beg Farm, and to cancel all interest on the sum."

MYLECHARAINE

[Standing up in amazement, with hands clutching table]: What in the worl' is the manin' of this play-actin'?

OLD WOMAN :

No play in it, John Robert, as thou will find just now. Thou will put thy name to this bit of paper, which my grandson young Jamesy of the Curragh Beg have wrote out clear for all to read.

MYLECHARAINE :

Well, of all the imperence—an' how if I say I will not sign no such trash?

OLD WOMAN :

Thou will sign it, though. Hark in thy ear an' hear what I have to tell thee. [Goes close up to him while he tries to push her away.] Well, if thou WILL have it out loud, it is this, thou black-hearted oul' houn' of

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

wickerdness—John Robert Mylecharaine, what were thou doin' in the Curragh down afther thou had me druv out yondhar night?

MYLECHARAINE

[Amazed and uneasy, but blustering]: What is it to thee where I am wan night or another? An' why wouldn' I be in the Curraghs, with the cattle and the coultis to be lookin' to—an' th' evil eye goin' a puttin' on them an' all, as thou well knows.

OLD WOMAN

[Pointing finger at him]: John Robert Mylecharaine, what has come of the boy that was with thee yondhar night in the Curragh down?

MYLECHARAINE

[Dazed, but still incredulous]: How would I be knowin' where the like of that fella is gone? Where would he be but aboard his ship that was to sail next day?

OLD WOMAN

[Pointing at him again]: John Robert Mylecharaine, what have thou done with the belt thou loosed off yondhar fella in the Curragh down?

MYLECHARAINE

[Cowed and convinced, sinks in a heap huddled up in his chair]: Aw, the dear, dear me. I'm only a poor oul' man, an' it lost at me for all in the Curraghs. Aw, well, well; what am I sayin'? What belt, woman? I verily believe it is thou have got it. Stole it thou have! Aw, the dear, dear me!

OLD WOMAN:

I have not got it, but I have got thee in the grips now, an' thou'll take an' put thy name to this bit of paper straight, or to the Deemster I am goin' with my story.

MYLECHARAINE

[Dully, with head sunk on breast]: For God's sake give me the paper, an' take thyself out of my sight.

[Old Woman goes to door and calls Betsey, who comes in.]

BETSEY:

What is it now, at all? Dear me heart, what's doin' on Himself!

OLD WOMAN:

Stan' you there, Betsey Ballure, an' watch while he's puttin' his name on this piece of paper. [Lays paper before Mylecharaine, holding it firmly with one hand, while with the other she puts quill pen into his unresisting hand. Mylecharaine signs slowly, with many groans.]

OLD WOMAN:

Is that all right, Betsey Ballure? I never was no scollard, and maybe he'll thrick me yet.

MYLECHARAINE

BETSEY

[Watching anxiously, as Mylecharaine gets up and goes stumbling to his room. Signs her name as witness and fills in the date]: Ay, right enough. I've seen his writin' many a time. What have thou said to the craythur, Alice? He is so white as a skate, and looks as if he had seen a ghost.

OLD WOMAN:

It's like he'll be seein' wan jus' now. He've got his unnisup anyhow.

BETSEY:

We'll all get that some day, it's like. I'm almost feared to ask thee, Alice, if what I'm fearin' is thrue.

OLD WOMAN:

Thou an' I, Betsey, can kape a saycret, an' there's no need for all the Parish to be puttin' more shame on him than he have got this night.

BETSEY:

Deed there is not! Well go on, Alice.

OLD WOMAN:

I went sthralin' down the curragh yondhar night, for the desperation I was in, and for I could not make up my mind to face the childher. An' I come to a place where a lot of them big stacks of turves is, with dubs of wather roun' them, an' there I laid me down on the bank, for I was bate out. An' behoul' ye, them two come along quait and peacable as ye plaze, an' lavin' good-tye with wan another—then the young fella came on—but, Lord help me, if the other didn't turn roun' sudden and come behind him an' his carranes makin' no noise—an' he gave him a whack on the head with his stick.

BETSEY:

Ogh, hogh, woman, what's this you're sayin'!

OLD WOMAN:

Thru, every word. The boy bogh went down like a log, an' the other started to pull some surt of a belt off of him. I took and heaved a sod of turf into the dub, an' gave a big shout to frighten th' oul' fella—my word how he lep'! He cleant urrov theer like lightening, droppin' what he had took, an' away with him up the road.

BETSEY:

An' the boy for all! Poor Dan'el bogh!

OLD WOMAN:

I thought he was dead for sure, but presently he come toe a bit, and thried for to sit him up. Well, well, how I got him home to our place I don't know in me senses, for he could scarce kape his feet with all my help. Fortunately, young Jamesey with the lanthorn come upon us, out lookin' for me, it's like, an' between us

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

we got him along to the Curragh Beg and put him to bed.

BETSEY :

Lord be good to us! Did thou go fetch doctor?

OLD WOMAN :

What would he want with a doctor—an' me there. Well, there he lay an' not a word out of him till this mornin', when he woke up like, an' now he have come roun' wonderful. Betsey, was there any jough between them that night?

BETSEY :

Not wan' dhrop. There was some butter-milk Himself called for, though—I don't know did the lad have any or not.

OLD WOMAN :

Betsey, there was something goin' a puttin' in his drink, I'm thinkin', for jus' a crack on the head of him would never have had that power over him all these days—a fine strong lusty lad like that.

BETSEY

[Throwing apron over her head and weeping loudly]: Aw dear, dear! Aw, Alice Vedn, he mus' have been lef' to himself cruel to do such a thing, for he's never been that bad-hearted, though terrible coorse, and miserly scandalous. But it's jus' the dirty greed that's doin' on him, an' see you now, that's what has put him in the han's of the Powers of Darkness that he was dhruv at th' Ill Wan to do such a crime.

OLD WOMAN :

That's the way it is—but still an' for all, the young fella has come through well. Now, Betsey, I'll jus' be puttin' a lil sight on Marg't; it's like the newses I've got for her will do curin' on her middlin' quick.

BETSEY :

You'll not be tellin' her—

OLD WOMAN :

No, no, I'll not tell her nawthin' but that her lad is come home safe, an' we'll be goin' a piece of the road over to meet him. Let him tell her what he likes after.

[Old woman goes out. Betsey thoughtfully puts peats together on the hearth. Mylecharaine enters, and sits down in arm chair, moodily staring into the fire.]

BETSEY :

Will I make thee a dish of harb-tay, Masthar?

MYLECHARAINE :

Plaze thyself, woman. It's like I'll not be in much longer to be throublin' thee.

BETSEY :

Chut, chut, don't be talkin' that way, an' you a fine strong man still, if you are gettin' up in years.

MYLECHARAINE

MYLECHARAINE :

I'm not feelin' well, Betsey. Deed I'm not feelin' very well at all.

BETSEY :

Say so! Thou'll have a dhrink of herb-tay, an' thou'll be the betther for it. They say a dhrop of herb-tay with a lump of sugar in it is awful good for a sore head.

MYLECHARAINE :

[After a pause]: Was Alice Wade tellin' thee what she seen yondhar night, Betsey?

BETSEY

[Gravely]: Ay, sure; she toul' me all she seen—there'll never be no need for no person but our three selves to know what happened, an' it's like the sooner we put it away the better—thou had been lettin' black thoughts get a houl't on thee, Masthar, an' that's the way th' Oul' Lad got thee in his power. I've been that way, too. There's many a time I have felt I could take a stick to Alfred Ernest for a stupid slowan as he is, an' lay him stretched. Aw, yes, many a time. It's like the best an' the highest is feelin' that way some times. An' you'll take heart now, Masthar, when I am tellin' thee the boy has come to fine.

MYLECHARAINE :

Eh! What! Wasn't he kilt dead at me after all! [Getting up and walking about excitedly.]

BETSEY :

He was not, an' he'll be none the worse for it, either. He was hurted, sure, but he's doin' all right now.

MYLECHARAINE :

Who foun' him, Betsey? There'll be talk goin' now, for all.

BETSEY :

Never a word need thou fear. Oul' Alice it was foun' him—[Mylecharaine starts conscience-stricken]—an' she nursed him at the Curragh Beg, she did; an' between her an' rre an' thee the saycret may lie. An' mind you, Dan'el himself is not knowin' nawthin' but that he was set upon an' robbed.

MYLECHARAINE :

An' Alice Wade got him to her place an' nursed him!

BETSEY :

She did, sure. Dhrink thy tay now, an' thou will be ready to give the boy a kind welcome jus' now, an' dance at the weddin' for all.

MYLECHARAINE

[Starting up suddenly]: Weddin'? What weddin'?

BETSEY :

Why, Dan'el an' our Marg't, sure. Who else—an' you'll be givin' them a kind word an' blessin'—

MYLECHARAINE

[Interrupting]: My blessin'! Aw my gogh!

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BETSEY :

An' thou'll do all thou can for them now, surely, an' thou'll give they consent pleasant an' plaze the young wans for all.

MYLECHARAINE

Well, well, I mus' do what I can. It's like if I don't give my consent they'll take and do without it. Well, well; the boy has plenty good lan' at him, an' a good name, they're sayin'. An' if Marg't is wantin' him, well, there'll be plenty in for the two of them—though the belt is losted!

BETSEY :

An' a good thing, too. Let it lie, Masthar. It's like it's deep enough in them Curragh dubs by this time, an' will be doin' no furdur mischief. Let it lie.

MYLECHARAINE :

Aye, aye, let it lie.

[Enter Margaret and Dan with Alice. Betsey steps back to them; Dan comes forward holding out his hand to Mylecharaine, who stands mazed and trembling.]

DAN :

Good evening, Mr Mylecharaine, sir. You'll shake hands with me, won't you?

MYLECHARAINE :

[Putting out a trembling hand, lays it on Dan's arm and feels him all over arm and shoulder]: Ogh, hogh! Is he come back for all. An' the dear me—[feeling his sleeve again and then looking at his own hand]—an' never no wet on him afther all!

DAN :

Wet, no! What would I be wet fer. If you were askin' me was I dhry now—

MYLECHARAINE :

Are thou dhry, boy? I'm dhry too. Here Betsey, fetch a dhrink for this falla.

[Betsey lifts keys from table and goes out.]

DAN :

Wait you though and hear me first. You know we were to have a talk on my return.

MYLECHARAINE :

An well,—what are thou wantin' to talk about?

DAN

[Impatiently]: My weddin', of course. What in all the world else is there to talk about?

MYLECHARAINE :

[Stupidly]: Aw, indade. An' who are thou goin' to wed?

DAN :

Man, man! Are thou butchered or what! What in all the world is doin' on thee! Wasn' I tellin' thee I was comin' back for to marry Margaret? Marry her I will too, with thy consent or without thy consent. Still an' for all—[speaking more calmly]—do thou come roun' peaceable now—[Margaret

MYLECHARAINE

comes forward and sits on arm of Mylecharaine's chair]—an' never will you repent it

MARGARET:

Me Daa was always good to me, an' I'm not fearin' him now. Listen here, Daa; I am going to have my own way this once, so I am—an' if you won't say yes, out of this house I march an' go with Alice.

MYLECHARAINE:

[Looking round suspiciously]: Aw, is Alice in it too! Aw well, well, if the kitten is sweelin' I suppose the worl' an' all mus' give way to it.

DAN:

I'm bound to tell you though that I have had a big loss.

MYLECHARAINE:

An' it's like I'm havin' a big loss too.

DAN:

It's this way Mr Mylecharaine, sir. Yondher belt I was showin' you—

MYLECHARAINE:

[Uneasily]: Aye, aye, I min' some surt of a belt thou had. [Getting excited.] Aw dear, the belt is losted—aye in the Curragh down, it's like. Aw, deep—deep!

BETSEY:

[In a warning voice]: Let it lie, Masthar! [Sets mug of ale before Mylecharaine and gives one to Dan, who puts it on the table untouched.]

DAN:

The belt is gone, sir, for I was set upon an' robbed that night in the Curragh by some of them Carrasdhoo fallas it's like, an' all the fine fortune is gone for ever. Not but what there's plenty in for us without it.

MYLECHARAINE:

Well, well, go your ways the two of you. [Dan takes Margaret's hand and leads her to one side. Betsey brings the mug to Dan, clapping him on the shoulder.]

BETSEY:

Dhrink thy jough, boy veen, an' we'll all be takin' joy of the fine weddin' that'll be in jus' now.

MYLECHARAINE:

[Grumbling]: That's the way it is. An' I suppose thou will be lavin' me to go with the young wans an' I'll be lef'! I suppose I mus' take orf it.

BETSEY:

It's like I may—but I'll tide thee over the weddin' first.

MYLECHARAINE:

[Standing up]: I'm thinkin', Betsey woman, thou'd bes' take meself, though I am but a poor desolated old man now—an' then the Wan Weddin' will do for us all!

BETSEY

[Incredulously]: Aw, well, thou'll get lave!

CURTAIN.

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